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Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Ed Dempsey, a resident of Woodstock, a member of the Northeast Communities Against Substance Abuse, a Roman Catholic priest, and a former executive director of a behavioral health treatment organization here in Connecticut (now happily retired).

Substance abuse treatment programs readily and necessarily acknowledge the crucial role played in the continuum of care model by the state's Regional Action Councils. The proposed budget, which you have before you for consideration, would cut the funding for the Regional Action Councils by approximately seventy-nine percent (79%), a reduction whose size no viable institution (no matter how good!) would be able to sustain and continue to function. No matter how clever or ingenious or deft an organization may be, none of the Regional Action Councils could survive and continue to provide the crucial services, on which all regions of our state depend.

Regardless of where you turn, no matter the milieu examined, no one today would deny the validity of PREVENTION as an experience-based best practice in combatting an undesired outcome. If Connecticut wishes to continue its commitment to a drug-free society and to those currently in the throes of substance abuse disorder, then there is little reason to expect that the proposed cut in funding can possibly result in anything other than a shunning or ignoring of that longstanding commitment.

From "up close," I have witnessed the wonders that substance-free living can and does restore to a beleaguered life. And so, on a very personal as well as on a professional level, I would strongly urge the Committee not to accept this proposed reduction in funding. In the full landscape of the state's biennial budget, this "saving" pales in comparison with the devastating harm it will wreak on the continuum of care, on the affected citizens of our state, and on the historical commitment that Connecticut has made and lived out in the last forty or so years.

Thank you for your time and attention; both are truly appreciated.

The Reverend Doctor Edward M. Dempsey, D.B.A.